

FRANCE and COLONIES PHILATELIST

July 2020 Whole No. 341 (Vol. 76, No. 3)



French Congo Pictorial Issue

Labels...see page 57



*5F Laureated Napoleon III
Single stamp on cover
See page 69*



Brazzaville French Congo to Charenton-le-Pont / Seine / France see page 73

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President's Letter



We are still in strange times, aren't we? An unexpected disease still taking its toll on humanity, with an odd mix of politics and science overlaid. Where I sit, Summit County, Ohio, we had been looking good until two days ago. New cases were the highest ever by probably 50%, although it was partly the result of no reporting a day or two before. The spike was certainly noticeable. Yesterday was back to "normal," so let's hope new cases stay down.

Let's keep our hopes up that science finds a better way to protect us than staying home and wearing masks. Without a vaccine, we are facing years of restricted activities. Of course we will do what we must, especially those of us at special risk, but a new normal accommodating this plague will not be a good one if we must spend our lives in semi-isolation.

Yet as stamp collectors, the stereotype is indeed people who spend too much of their lives in their stamp room. Hah! How can that be? Covid-19 just provides one more excuse for us to enjoy our hobby. And it doesn't mean that we can't have contact with other collectors. I managed to learn enough about Zoom (with my wife's help) to host several stamp related meetings. Turns out that phones still work, too. A west coast philatelic friend called to say that he tries to connect with five friends every day, working through a list of about 200. That's a great idea, isn't it?

It's still hard to believe that there hasn't been a World Series of Philately stamp show since the March Party in Cleveland. As of now I believe nearly all shows have been canceled through the end of the year. Chicagopex and Florex are still moving ahead, but the rest are delayed for a year. As you can understand, many dealers, volunteers and attendees are in the Covid-19 at-risk categories, especially age, so it is difficult to get us to attend in any role. Stamp collecting is fun, but not if we end up sick as a result of pursuing our hobby.

You can see in the current journal that I have been busy, too. Maybe two years ago now a friend convinced me to reignite my former interest in French Congo. Over the past several months I have made the acquaintance of two European specialists, Phillippe Lindekens and Alain Hurpet, both of whom have helped considerably to push me.

My hope is that you will find my article interesting and intriguing. Here is a 120 year old stamp issue where I was still able to make new discoveries. I believe one could probably plate every position of the leopard stamps, and probably the two other designs as well. This is just the kind of study that Mortimer Neinken, Carroll Chase, Jerome Wagshall and others were doing with U.S. stamps, and is still resulting in new discoveries. Because there is probably a handful of interested French Congo collectors as opposed to hundreds of U.S. specialists, the excitement of these new discoveries is, uh, muted.

That has not yet discouraged me. In coming issues I will tackle the Bakalois woman and coconut grove designs, also adding to the knowledge base. We'll see if that engenders enough interest for someone to tackle plate positions for all of the stamps.

It took almost no arm-twisting to have M. Lindekens join our society. I was so pleased that he then immediately shared an article about an oddity of French Congo registered mail that you will also find in this issue of our journal.

M. Lindekens and his son publish three free bulletins about philately. The most recent is their North African bulletin (Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria), published in June. If you visit their site, <http://philafrika.be>, you will find a wealth of interesting philatelic information. I encourage you to subscribe to their bulletins.

We are trying something new for our society. Many years ago the New York meetings at the Collectors Club started to shrink. They continued

unofficially for quite a while after Dave Herendeen began our meetings at WSP shows. Now we have readily accessible technology that permits us to hold a meeting electronically, so we can convene via the web. Our board supported the idea wholeheartedly, and Ed Grabowski volunteered to speak at our first meeting.

On August 25, 7:30 PM EDT, we will hold a Zoom meeting where Ed will give us a taste of his Grand Prix winning (Washington 2006) Guadeloupe collection. Obviously, it was a fantastic assemblage, probably the best ever, and Ed is willing to share the highlights and tell stories as only he can do. Ed expects to talk for about 35 minutes, with time for questions and responses at the end. Please join us that evening. We will send a Zoom invitation through Constant Contact with the instructions to join.

How about our next in-person meeting? It is too soon to tell, of course. May 2021 is a long way away. It is nearly impossible to forecast what public meetings, air travel, our economy, our health, and many other things will look like. For now, I would say we should plan as though we will be there in force. Please think about presentations, exhibiting and just plain being there to have some fun. The more the merrier. Let's hope that we can safely meet indoors as well as travel to and from safely. Right now that doesn't seem to be in the cards.

At our May telephonic board meeting we also agreed once more to offer dealer ads in our journal. We encourage you to patronize these dealers whenever you can.

I hope that all of you continue to enjoy good health and that you are able to live comfortably within the confines dictated by Covid-19. Please join the Zoom meeting on August 25 for what will certainly be an informative presentation. Zoom allows all of us to participate, so as I noted above, there will be a Q & A session at the end.

I think that's all for this quarter, although I certainly have overlooked something important. Around Akron we have hot, hot weather, but the nights are great. The afternoons are a great time to be indoors writing about stamps and postal history. Give it a try! Please stay safe.

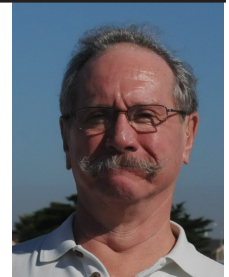
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Editorial



We are fortunate to have a wide variety of articles and subjects in this issue of the journal. It's a bit stilted towards the French colonies as usual. I can only publish what I receive. I hesitate to write this, lest the situation reverse, but I've received a nice selection of articles for October and have promises for more.

I will remind members again that if you aren't receiving the digital journal we don't have your email. Send it to Joel Bromberg whose contact information is on the mast head.

Do you collect French North Africa, Belgium, or Belgium Colonies? Check out the link on our website for Maghrebophila. The same entity offers similar publications on Belgium and the Belgian Congo Philately and distributes them free on request. Contact Phillippe Lindekens at lindekens.bogaerts@skynet.be.

Studying the 1900 French Congo “Pictorial Issue”

Kenneth R Nilsestuen

Many of us have seen the leopard stamp, usually the Middle Congo series or its varieties overprinted for Cameroun, Chad or Ubangi-Shari, in our childhood stamp packets. Most of us know that the elongated typographed version was a modification of the original engraved stamps issued for French Congo. This article will devote itself to musings on how Chassepot created the printing plates and the resulting varieties of the issued leopard stamps, a few of which have long been known.

Introduction

Two areas deserve comment. First relates to the stamps and the origin of the issue. In 1900 there was an exposition in Paris that included pavilions highlighting the empire’s colonies. France was encouraging interest in those colonies, promoting economic development, exploration and tourism. Rumors were that the Belgians were about to issue another stamp issue to promote Congo Free State (later Belgian Congo), their only significant African interest. In 1894 they had already issued colorful engraved stamps that promoted the mysteries of the Congo basin (Fig. 1.) The rumors turned out to be untrue – only four of the older designs were re-issued in new colors – and the next set of stamps for Belgian Congo was in 1908, well after the French Congo issue.



Nonetheless, the French went ahead with their Congo stamp plans. The Paris-based Administration des Postes (AdP) wanted well-produced colorful stamps. While it appears that no one has found (or studied, if they exist) the archives for these stamps, AdP decided on bi-colored engraved stamps printed on watermarked paper. That caused some problems.

AdP had printed most of the colonial stamps to date. Local exceptions exist, including local surcharges to cover stamp shortages. Unfortunately, AdP could only produce typographed stamps. Nearly all of them had been one color, too. The couple of exceptions, 1894 Obock and Somali Coast bi-colors, were still typographed. AdP had never tackled intaglio printing, nor had its contractors¹. For the first time AdP contracted stamp production, choosing A. Chassepot et Cie. Whether the paper was a deal between AdP and the maker or a subcontract from Chassepot, it was manufactured by Maison Perrigot Mazure, and of course included the watermarks.

The second introductory area is that despite several writers doing a good job of describing how and by whom the stamps were designed and printed, these writers have skipped from there to the major identified varieties that resulted when the stamps were printed. This article is in part an effort to fill that gap – how did Chassepot, the artist and engraver get from artwork to printed stamps?² In addition to these authors, I owe a great deal to Messrs. Phillippe Lindekens and Alain Hurpet. They have willingly shared their collections and knowledge to improve this article. All of these philatelists are my sources for the basic information that follows.

Design

The designer was Paul Merwart (1855-1902), a known artist commissioned by the French naval



Figure 1 – Congo Free State elephant: 1894 Congo Free State stamp showing elephant hunt.

department as its official painter. It seems that his leopard design was original art, as was the high value alley of coconut trees, but the Bakalois woman was copied from a photograph or postcard. The designs were engraved by Benjamin Damann (1835-1921). He has also left his artistic mark outside of philately, principally for his engravings of J. F. Millet's paintings, especially *The Gleaners*. His works were exhibited at the Paris Salon from 1877 to 1920, where he won several gold medals. M. Damman also engraved the 1902 Somali Coast stamps, the 1903 Madagascar zebu and 1904 Denmark Christian X stamps.

To this time no one has mentioned the whereabouts of the original art by Merwart. In a contemporary article there is a mention that Merwart's three 60 cm x 30 cm paintings were on display at the Paris Exposition (presumably 30 cm x 60 cm for the vertical designs)³. However, M. Hurpet owns a smaller original painting of the coconut palms that I will discuss in my third article. No one has mentioned seeing the original dies created by Damman, nor the plates from which the stamps were printed. As a result, we are left to speculate about many things.

First leopard design

Stone describes a very large die essay on "light porous card" in reddish brown or sepia with a slate or grey-blue background. M. Lindekens has an electronic image of this essay with the description "*Epreuve d'Artiste*" typed in the top margin (mounted on a page?). This is probably the first design that Damman created from Merwart's painting. It appears that it was a single die, rather than two. Because of its large scale, shading lines in the elephant tusks, for example, are long, rather than dashes or dots as in the smaller essays and final stamp design. Overall the image is very impressive, as it surely was for Chassepot, the colonial ministry and the AdP, despite rather uninteresting colors. The whereabouts of this very large essay are unknown to Messrs. Lindekens, Hurpet and me⁴.

Second leopard design

Stone, Nolet and I agree that a small die essay was almost certainly Damman's next effort to engrave the stamp. (Fig. 2.) The design itself is

smaller than the issued stamp, only 21½mm x 17½mm. Just as with the very large die essay, Damman took great care to engrave details, such as four toes with claws on the leopard's forepaws, clear blades of grass in the background, and excellent shading in the tusks at the bottom of the frame. A distinguishing design feature is that the gap between the leopard's left front paw and the tusk below it is wider than either the very large die essay (first design) or what I refer to as the third leopard design.

Connelly owned an impression of this small die essay in light ultramarine with Damman's signature (or initials, according to Stone) in ink below the stamp⁵. M. Hurpet owns several, including one also signed by Damman, and I own one impression of this essay printed in three colors on a large piece of paper (142mm x 105mm) (Fig. 3).



Figure 2 – Small essay:
Three color essay, enlarged.

It is my opinion that there was but a single die. In the case of the one illustrated in Figs. 2 and 3, it was carefully inked and all three colors were printed simultaneously. For example, blades of grass extend into the body of the leopard. These are not green, but rather are brown, the color of the leopard. The leopard's right ear, a single looped line, is green. The right side of the leopard's face and the blades of grass abut each other. The line representing the edge of the leopard's face is a blend of the two ink colors, but does not appear to be a green line atop a brown one or vice versa.

If the colors had been on separate dies, the colors would not have varied in this way. The entire leopard, including its ears, would have been inked in brown. The blades of grass would have been green, even where the grass extends across the leopard's body.

Even if the image were inked several times and impressed on the paper three times, I believe



Figure 3 – Large die essay: Full three color essay, sunk on medium weight paper

Damman would have ensured that colors were applied correctly to every detail of the design. Remember the attention to detail that marks a good engraver! For the reasons described in the previous paragraph, I conclude that there was a single die inked with three colors and applied once to the paper to create this small essay.

This design had at least two problems. First, producing a three color stamp would take three master dies, three printing plates and three passes through a flat plate press. This would make the stamps expensive to produce and allow many more chances for error.

Second, the design was too small. Even with contrasting colors, it would be hard to read the design. One can argue that the navigation and commerce (groupe type) stamps suffered from the same problem, but a few postal authorities around the world were now printing larger designs. Examples include the U.S. Columbian stamps and Great Britain's shilling and pound value stamps. Intricate designs required a larger format to show their beauty to full effect. Damman's essay was simply too small.

Third leopard design

Damman then created at least two dies for a third essay. These were still smaller (27mm x 20mm) than the final stamp, but some decisions had been made. The frame and the leopard were one die, the grassy jungle was the second.

The reason for my “at least” comment is that Stone reports at least one single color sunken die essay, and between M. Hurpet and me, we own five in four different colors – blue, red, green and brown red. It is hard to tell if these are from a single die or separate frame and background dies. My best evaluation is that these sunken die essays were from a single die (Fig.4). The paper is 114 x 91 mm, the sunken area 72 x 44 mm.



Figure 4 – This small sunken die essay appears to be a single die, not separate frame / leopard and grasses.

In addition to the single sunken die essays, M. Hurpet owns a block of four sunken die proof signed by Merwart printed in violet brown (Fig. 5). This is similar to other sheets of four, two rows and two columns, printed on thinner paper in several colors. Stone does not list the colors, but M. Hurpet has a sheet of four in black signed by Merwart. Between us we have bicolored sheets of four with black frame and red background (Fig. 6) and blue with red background. One of M. Hurpet's sheets has large margins, 220 mm x 145 mm, that appears to be the full size of the paper used. When one compares the bicolor essays with the single color essays, the leopard and frame appear to be the same die. It is possible that Damman duplicated his complete image die and erased the grass background, then created a second die with just the grass. There are just enough differences in the grass background that it doesn't seem to be a copy of the single color die.

We also own singles with red frame and slightly paler red background, and another with light brown frame and green background. In the case of the latter item, the registration is not perfect, so the green is shifted to the right about one mm. Close examination of the sunken die essay and sheet impressions in my collection leads to my conclusion that the frame and leopard were from the same master die. I base this on the consistently shortened “W” in Paul Merwart's name at the lower left (Fig. 7).



Figure 5 – Sunken die proof signed by Paul Merwart. Collection Alain Hurpet.



Figure 6 – Block of four essays, slightly smaller than final design

In addition, there are faint guidelines, less than 1-½ mm long, between positions three and four and below the impressions (Fig. 8). The siderographer would have used these markings to line up the images on the plate from a single master die. If the siderographer was using a transfer roll with two images, it would be more helpful to use a posi-



Figure 7 – Enlargement of tablet at lower left showing short “W” in Merwart’s name.

tion dot for alignment rather than guidelines. One can dispute my interpretation, of course.

The background die shows differences in the four positions. Some of these differences may be inking or plate wiping. However, the clearest difference is a gap between the toes of the leopard’s back paw. On the two left impressions on the sheet, this gap is filled with grass engraved on the background die (Fig. 9).



Figure 8 – Magnified image showing faint guidelines between and below stamp images

The two stamps at the right show the grass clipped so that the gap has no color in it (Fig. 10). The blue and red single has the same white space. This is the first of many varieties on the stamps, but more on that as we go. It again raises a question about whether the four positions were created from a transfer roll where positions one and three match each other and positions two and four match, or separate impressions from a single die with Damman recutting images on the plate.

We don’t know why these dies were created, nor when. I propose two theories. One is that Damman intended this to be the final stamp. The small sheets were prepared to test Chassepot’s ability to create a printing plate from a single master die (or rather two, one foreground, one background) and align the sheets when being put



Figure 9 – Enlarged image showing red blade of grass between toes



Figure 10 – Image showing white space where no blade of grass extends into paw

through the press twice. The engraving is somewhat coarser than the three color sunken die essay, probably because the smaller essay was too finely engraved to withstand thousands of impressions.

My second theory is that the dies were prepared later, because Chassepot and Damman used the brown and green essays as samples or promotional items. These samples could have been left over from before the final design was engraved, or the dies could have been prepared afterwards.

My final thought about what actually happened is that my first guess is more likely: these dies and plates probably were prepared before the final stamp dies and reprints made later for the samples.

The leopard stamp

As with the third essays the frame and leopard were one die, the grassy jungle the other. Because these were the dies used to produce the finished stamps, these two dies were probably the fourth effort by Damman. For sake of discussion let's consider the actual stamp dies to be the fourth design. The question that earlier writers have not considered is how the dies got to the printing plates.

When one looks at how early United States intaglio stamp plates were produced, one finds an original die copied to a transfer roll of several images, followed by preparation of a printing plate from the transfer roll. Looking at the studies of early American issues, students have been able to plate many of these. One of the characteristics is that varieties occur repeatedly, demonstrating that there were multi-image transfer rolls used to create the plates⁷.

For the leopard stamps I have two partial sheet black plate proofs in my collection⁸. Each one is five columns by ten rows, positions 6 through 10, 16 through 20 and so on to positions 96 through 100. The values are two centimes and four centimes. The proofs are on heavy, soft unwatermarked paper. In the margins are identical markings where the plates were attached to the press. Both sheets are the frame and leopard on-

ly, not the background. (Fig. 11, margins reduced.)



Figure 11 – Half sheet black proof, two centimes

I first studied the two partial sheets looking for consistencies. As in Fig. 5, at the lower left is a tablet with Merwart's name in it. The left leg of the first "R" is very faint in every position. All letters of his name touch the top frame line of the box in which they are engraved (Fig. 12). The lines in the ornamentation at the upper left of each proof image are identical in every position (Fig. 13). There are other identical lines throughout the frame and leopard.

Before long one realizes that there are also differences, especially in the leopard. Reviewing all fifty positions, there are no two leopards that are exactly alike. However, the varieties are identical



Figure 12 – Lower left tablet enlarged to show weak or missing left upright in “R” and all letters touching top of tablet frame (Position 38)



Figure 13 – Enlarged upper left corner showing fine engraving (position 80)



Figure 14 – Normal – right end tusk reappears behind left tusk



Figure 15 – Right tusk does not reappear behind left tusk (Position 91)

in each position on the two proof sheets. In the half sheet black proofs there are no repeating varieties that would indicate use of a multiple image transfer roll. If Chassepot had used such a transfer roll, one would see consistent or repeating varieties across the sheet.

Another observation is that when one looks at the sheet obliquely, the impressions are not completely aligned. The images are out of line more in the columns than the rows, but there are clearly wider and narrower spaces between the stamps. The images are out of place by fractions of a millimeter, but one can see that they do not line up. A few random positions seem to be slightly twisted (position 58 seems the most obvious), which would repeat if there were a multiple image transfer roll containing a misaligned image. The misalignment does not seem to be a repeating pattern, again leading one to conclude that if Chassepot used a transfer roll, it had only one image on it.

There is one “famous” variety, listed in the catalogs. In position 91 the left tusk at the bottom of the design, which crosses under the right side tusk, does not reappear. In all other positions the design is complete, with the end of the tusk showing (Fig. 14). The background grass is unchanged – there is a white space in position 91 where the tusk should appear (Fig. 15).

Nolet discovered a second variety in that same bottom row⁹. In 98 positions on the sheet the end of the left tusk looks like it was sawed or cut off – it is drawn as a straight cut across the tusk with a shaded center where the nerve and dentin would pass¹⁰. In position 91, as mentioned, the end is missing. In position 94 the end of the tusk is rounded, sort of like a pool cue tip (Fig. 16). I have found this variety on the two, four and fifteen centimes values. Nolet and I assume that it occurs on every value.

One can explain the position 94 variety as a recut – something happened when creating the plate that resulted in a correction that didn’t match the other positions. However, position 91 is a true oddity. It seems almost intentional that the end of the tusk was omitted.



Figure 16 – End of right tusk is rounded, not cleanly cut (Position 94)

If Damman was carefully correcting bad die transfers, how could he miss this one? What would be his reasoning? Was there a Chassepot supervisor who had to approve the plate? How did this end up in the finished product?

Creating six plates for six values

I have two full sheets of stamps in my collection, also the two and four centimes values, although they are broken apart because of age. As I studied them alongside the black proofs, it became clear that the values in the tablets were very different. On the full sheet and black proof the “2” is essentially identical in every position. The numeral nearly fills the tablet, top to bottom. It is always centered, the shading is uniform and finely engraved, shading lines at right angles and so close together that the numeral appears to be almost solid color (Fig. 17).

On the four centimes black proof and full sheet the “4” does not fill the tablet. Even if not magnified, one can see that the numerals wander around the tablet, up and down, side to side (Fig. 18). Under magnification one can see that the numerals are much more crudely engraved. Lines exceed the outline of the numeral (positions 57 (Fig. 19), 70 (Fig. 20), and 100 (Fig. 21) are all ex-

amples from the proof sheet), the shape varies, the shading is sometimes more or less vertical lines and sometimes roughly cross-hatched. See also Fig. 22, a random example of a ten centimes stamp showing the crudeness of the value engraving¹¹.



Figure 17 – Enlarged value tablet showing finely cross-hatched engraving, numeral fills the tablet top to bottom

Figure 18 – Enlarged value tablets showing variances in “4”: position, quality of shading and shape



Figure 19 – Position 57

Figure 20 – Position 70

Figure 21 – Position 100

Enlarged value tablets showing lines extending beyond numeral edges, cruder lines inside figure “4,” etc.



Figure 22 – Enlarged “10” showing tilted numerals, crude shading



Figure 21 – “15”: See endnote 6. Note horizontal line in top of frame, position 100.

After observing this, I checked the remaining leopard stamps in my collection. Every value except the two centimes (one, four, five, ten and fif-

teen) shows the same kind of crude engraving and wandering position within the value tablet.

This led me to a new conclusion – Damman engraved a single master die for the frame and a single master die for the background. The master had a “2” in the value tablet. This die (or a transfer roll with a single image of the stamp) was used 100 times to create the two centimes printing plate. Based on the poorer quality of the other values, it would not have been possible for Damman to place the “2” exactly in every position, nor would the quality of his engraving be adequate to make each one identical and finely cross-hatched.

Now Chassepot needed to prepare five more plates for the remaining values. Because of the constant position varieties in the two black proofs I have, it seems that the two centimes plate was duplicated¹². Could they do this? Yes! Thanks to email discussions with Ken Lawrence and a return to *Fundamentals of Philately*¹³, it seemed likely that Chassepot used a galvanic process to duplicate the printing plates. This process was well known to printers, and would be a straightforward way to cost effectively reproduce the plates. This seems to be the most likely way that Chassepot made five additional plates, reproducing the varieties found on the two centimes “master” plate.

Once the duplicates were made, Damman removed the “2” in each position and re-engraved each value in every position. It is also possible that they duplicated the two centimes plate once, removed the values and then made four more plates with no values in the tablet. This is more likely based on my observations about the Bakalois woman design (my next article). Damman’s process was certainly a means to guarantee his job for a while, for this had to be time consuming. In a way this also supports the idea that there was only one master die and Chassepot did not have or use the technology to prepare more than one. They could have prepared a master die for *each value* and applied it 100 times to create the five other plates.

Why wouldn’t they do this? Because Damman had to do too much recutting to make a good two centimes plate. It wasn’t just the odd spot here

and there. As I mentioned above, for the fifty positions on my black proof sheets every leopard is different. The easiest changes to spot were in two areas. First is where the right rear leg comes behind the left forepaw. The way the rear paw ends, the way the left forepaw intersects with the rear paw, the claws and toes of the forepaw are different in each position. See differences in left circled areas of Figs. 24 and 25.



Figure 24 – Position 28, circled areas highlight where differences are more common



Figure 25 – Position 60, differences between circled areas and position 28 are clear

The second place to easily spot differences is the left rear leg. Again, the toes and claws vary considerably, but also open spaces in the haunch and other details of the leg are different in every position. Again, look at the orange circles at the right in Figs. 24 and 25.

Importantly, these variations occur in both the two and four centimes plate proof sheets. Each position is the same from sheet to sheet. These variations support the idea that making the 100 position master plate (two centimes) was difficult. Damman had to do substantial work to improve the plate before it was ready for use. Once he finished, Chassepot then made the other plates.

The consistency of these plate varieties supports the idea that Chassepot did not use the master die to create six 100-image plates, then erase and re-engage the values. It would have been impossible for the position varieties to match from plate to plate.

Regarding the background, I have a two by two black proof of the background that is the size of the finished stamps (Fig. 26). One can see variations among the four positions that might be the result of poor inking, but not in all cases. To highlight just a few, there is an outline along the back of the leopard in all four positions, but it is much stronger and more complete in position 1. In position 4, below where the leopard's chin would print, the grass is positioned differently and points much more to the left. Another difference is the angle of the filler inside the leopard's tail at the right, especially position 2.



Figure 26 – Even casual study reveals differences in the engraved images. See text for examples

While I would like to draw a conclusion that all positions were partially recut by Damman, I cannot reach that conclusion from this block of four.

It does make sense that there was only one background plate, since the background was identical for all six leopard values.

I have examined the two full sheets in my possession as well. It is easy to see the pale gray background on the four centimes sheet. However, the yellow background on the two centimes value does not provide much contrast with the paper on which it is printed. I examined other values as well, and found some variations. I have several combinations of positions 91 and 92, and I was able to identify some consistent background differences in the two positions.

One of the reasons that this is difficult to do is that the thick paper that Maison Perrigot Mazure provided was terrible for engraved stamps. Other commentators have even wondered if the stamps were really intaglio printed or lithographed, the paper was so ill-suited for these stamps. It is apparent that many differences between stamps are the result of unequal inking applied to this paper. However, when the same lines are added, omitted or tilted in a different direction in the same sheet position, this is a variation in the die and not just the result of inking or paper differences.

One can also see that the alignment of the frame and background is consistent on the two full sheets. Color registration markings are visible in both sheet margins, each less than 1 mm off from “perfect.” This misalignment results in the frame and background not quite matching in position 1. By the time we get to position 100, the background has shifted noticeably downward and to the right. The difference isn’t exactly the same on the two sheets, possibly due to a different level of moisture in the paper when the stamps were printed or to the sheets being placed on the presses in slightly different positions (“twisted”).

After this analysis I believe that I can see enough consistency to conclude that there was only one plate prepared for the background, and it was used for all values. Based on the published quantities, there would have been just over 12,400 impressions, which with some refurbishing, should be within the useful life of a printing plate¹⁴.

Stepping back for a moment, Chassepot made some additional proofs before starting production

of the final stamps. In addition to the black proofs, Chassepot produced proof sheets in brown. I own a block of 12 of the 15 centimes stamp, positions 1 to 3 through positions 31 to 33. These images show similar variations as those described earlier for the black proof sheets.

M. Hurpet and I also have all six values with frame-only color trials on card. Most are very close to the issued colors. Between us we also have a selection of bicolor trials with black background and issued colors on card and unwatermarked paper (Fig 27). M. Hurpet has a set of partial blocks printed on card with the manuscript notation “*1^{er} tirage d’essai en couleur, accepté, G. Dalmas.*” (Fig. 28.)



Figure 27 – One centime and five centimes issued trial colors on card



Figure 28 – Ten centimes block of four with notation on reverse that colors are approved. Collection Alain Hurpet

I also own a real oddity. It is a one centime essay, if real, in green. It is the size of the issued stamps, and generally matches the design. It is on a smooth, thin paper similar to the other essays and proofs. However, there are two easily distinguished features – there are horizontal white lines in the jungle grasses above the leopard, and the leopard’s left ear faces forward ra-

ther than to the left. There are other small differences as well. Is this a fake? A poor copy? Another die created by Damman? I am not sure, but I mention it here and provide a picture for your contemplation (Fig. 29).



Figure 29 – Mysterious essay, unissued color, with several design differences

Large leopard label

Damman engraved one more label, this time larger than the actual stamps. As with the smaller designs, the frame and leopard were one die, the background another. He also included a “2” in the value tablet. The images are 39.5 mm x 29 mm. I refer to these as labels because I believe they were created after the stamps were issued. Stone describes these as essays, but in philatelic parlance “essay” refers to a proposal, not a final design. These labels don’t seem to be part of the design process, but rather were intended for other purposes. For that reason I don’t believe they would meet the definition of “essay.”

These labels were used to provide commemorative folios to dignitaries, although I don’t know how many or to whom they were given. I do have one leather-bound box in gray with gold lettering. The legend says “Timbres-Poste de Congo Français / Emission 1900 / Épreuves d’État Offertes / à Monsieur Jean Decrais / Chef de Cabinet du Ministre des Colonies.” Inside are six thick cards: three sunken die progressive proofs in black ink of these large design labels (one of each design – leopard, Bakalois woman and coconut grove) and three cards with bi-color labels approximating issued colors glued on. At this time Decrais was Secretary General of the Colonial Ministry and head of the Cabinet.

The cards are very stiff but not high quality, because they are yellowing with age. Stone described the cardboard as “bone-white” in 1966, but it is no longer¹⁵. The cards are large – 238 mm x 178 mm – and the sunken area of the die proofs is about 40 mm smaller in each dimension. The cards fit snugly in their box.

The quality of Damman’s engraving is equal to that of his first small essay (Fig. 30). Other than once again not engraving the first “R” in Merwart’s name very well, the fine lines lend a very crisp look. Tusk shading, the care he took with the grassy background, the fine lines in the frame all attest to Damman’s attention to detail. Fig. 31 shows the leopard design card with six labels. These are printed on thin paper and glued to the backing cardboard. As I said, the colors are approximately those of the issued stamps. This card is much closer to bone white as Stone described in 1966.



Figure 30 – Black proof of the label from Decrais’ presentation box



Figure 31 – Card from Decrais' presentation box with six colored labels in colors roughly matching those of the issued stamps (one centime through 15 centimes)

In addition to the labels mounted on card, I have a half dozen more single examples in different colors. The single examples are printed on very thin paper. I have no examples with top or bottom margins, but Figs. 32 and 33 have side margins. The edges look to be randomly serrated, but the pattern actually repeats, similar to a pinking shear used when cutting fabric. These two labels are not printed in colors used on the cards and may have been used as samples by Chassepot or Damman. M. Hurpet notes in his exhibit that these unmounted labels were given to lesser persons at the colonial ministry, according to a previous owner. We do not have an original source to confirm this.



Figures 32 and 33 – Labels printed on very thin paper. Serrated edges are a repeating pattern

That ends the discussion of the five designs of the leopard stamps. The next article will address the Bakalois woman design, used for the middle values of the set.

End Notes

1. For a brief but instructive explanation of intaglio and typographic printing methods, see the introduction to any recent Scott catalog.
2. Connelly, William J., "The French Congo Definitives [sic]," *France and Colonies Philatelist*, Whole Nos. 109, 110, 112 & 115, (New York, 1961-1962); Jacques Nolet, "Congo français, émission 1900-1907," *Les Cahiers de l'Académie – Opus VI*, (Quebec, Canada, August 1988); Robert G. Stone, "The Pictorial Issues of French Colonies, 1891-1941," *The Essay-Proof Journal*, Whole Nos. 89-90, 1966-1967. These are my principal sources for much of the basic information in the article.
3. Winter, W., "Paris, Post und Philatelie auf der Pariser Weltausstellung," *Illustriertes Briefmarken-Journal*, (Leipzig), Verlag von Gebrüder Senf. No. 22, 17 November 1900, page 431, and No. 23, 1 December 1900, page 446, quoted in Wolfgang Strobel's article "La série de timbres graves de 1901 du Congo," *Bulletin COL.FRA* no. 136, p. 19.
4. I would reproduce it here, but we are unsure of the source and copyright limitations.
5. Connelly's essay, described as a "Small Die Essay," is illustrated in *The Essay-Proof Journal*, Whole No. 90, p. 63.
6. For an excellent, well-illustrated explanation of the process, see Skinner, Hubert C. and Charles J. Peterson (eds.), *The 1851 Issue of United States Stamps: a Sesquicentennial Retrospective, Part IB* (New Orleans, 2006).
7. For a good description of the process and how it results in various types, see Stanley B. Ashbrook, *The United States One Cent Stamp of 1851-1857, Chapters V, VI, VII and XI* (New York, 1938).
8. M. Hurpet also owns two blocks of nine, positions 1 to 3, 11 to 13 and 21 to 23, of the two and four centimes black proof sheet. He owns a left margin block of four of the background (discussed below in the text). I also have a top row single of the ten centimes black proof sheet, probably position 7, and a block of four, positions 31-32 and 41-42. All of these positions are based on a 100 image plate, on which all of us agree.
9. Nolet, p. H20.
10. It is worth noting that the quality of the paper and ink used for final stamp production makes this detail (and others) very hard to see.
11. One can also see that the top of the value tablet in position 100 (Fig. 21) has a horizontal line in the center rather than the carefully engraved short vertical lines in other positions. Position 100 on the two centimes sheet does not show this variation, but both the four centimes black proof sheet and issued sheet have the line. I have found similar lines on a one centime and several fifteen centimes stamps (Fig. 23). As an aside, Nolet observed the variation in the numerals, too (p. H23). He referenced engraving on "printing cylinders," which for a flat plate implies a multi-image transfer roll. For reasons I explain in this article, I believe there was

only one master die used to create a two centimes plate, and Damman individually engraved values on all other leopard plates.

12. I find using the black proof better than using the printed stamps for these comparisons. The finished stamps, as I will someday discuss, are on a very poor paper to see these small differences.

13. Williams, L.N. and M., (York, PA, 1971), pp. 157, ff.

14. According to Yvert & Tellier, Catalogue des Timbres-Poste de la France et des Colonies Françaises,

(Amiens, 1928), p. 348, the issued quantities were a total of 1,240,900 stamps:

1 centime 249,000

2 centime 199,300

4 centime 145,000

5 centime 199,500

10 centime 99,700

15 centime 347,600

15. Stone, op. cit., p.60.

Calmette 1934 Anti-Tuberculosis - Addendum

James R. Taylor FRPSL

Further to my article in the France & Colonies Philatelist (Taylor, 2020), several “stamp-like” items have recently been added to the exhibit. While they do not pay postage or cannot be stuck on a letter, they do form part of the various stamp related 1934 fundraising campaign of the *Comité National de Défense Contre la Tuberculose*.

The first is an attractive novelty item that enlarges and reproduces, in three colors, the Calmette label as a jigsaw puzzle (Figure A). The size of the puzzle, on thick cardboard, is 143 x 102 x 1.5 mm. The inscription in tiny letters in the lower-left corner reads *PUZZLE J.V.63, B^d DE COURGELLES, PARIS*. The puzzle was sold enclosed in a 160 x 112 glassine envelope (Figure B) inscribed *LE TIMBRE ANTITUBERCULEUX / DÉCOUPÉ / PRIX DE VENTE: 1 FRANC* in dark blue ink. The Committee name and address, in French, is printed in smaller letters. The familiar double-barred crosses are in the four corners of the envelope.



Figure 1. The Calmette Anti-Tuberculosis stamp enlarged and reproduced as a jigsaw puzzle.



Figure 2. A printed glassine envelope that enclosed the Calmette jigsaw puzzle. The puzzle sold for one franc.

There is no printing on the back of the glassine envelope.



Figure 3. The Calmette metal badge. The design mimicked in miniature the large stamp decals with die-cut perforations.

Another novel item is a metal badge 30 x 20mm. The miniature design, stamped in relief, mimics the large “stamp-like” decals that were sold in 5f, 10f, and 50f denominations. The double-barred crosses are in the upper right and left corners of the badge. Two olive branches flank Calmette’s portrait. The badge with an attached stickpin, itself does not show a face value. I do not know if the badge was given for a substantial donation or awarded as a decoration or prize.

These items, while non-philatelic, are welcome collateral material to decorate my display or open class exhibit. Both the puzzle and the badge were sold or issued in limited quantities in 1934 are now difficult to acquire.

Reference

Taylor, James R., 2020, France: 1934 8th National Anti-Tuberculosis “Stamp” Campaign “Calmette the Savior of Children”, France & Colonies Philatelist, n. 340 (v.76 n. 2), April, p. 33-38.

Single Use of 5 franc laureated Napoleon III to the United States, 1869

Thomas W. Broadhead

Some early French stamps are rarely seen on covers, and the 5 franc laureated Napoleon III of November, 1869 (Spink/Maury 33) is one of those. Most postal usages are combined with other stamps of the period on internal large envelopes with declared value. Not surprisingly, this stamp is very rare as a single use on cover, and my Spink/Maury 2016 catalog prices a single use at 28,500 euros. This is unchanged from at least 2009 (Maury, Ceres & Dallay catalog). It is unpriced in the classic, Yvert & Tellier catalog of 1975, further testimony to its rarity and infrequent appearance on the auction markets.

The cover shown here is a spectacular example of an international use of the 5 franc. I have never seen another in more than 30 years. My interest was drawn in my search for “petite envelope” on the Delcampe auction site. I collect visiting card (carte de visite) mail from France, so this is one of many search terms I use. The auction opened 15 April with a minimum bid of 105 euros, and I jumped on that with a token bid at the minimum. On April 22, the date the auction closed, I was still the only bidder, but there were 114 visits and 10 watchers. I raised my own bid to 500 euros – which was wishful thinking, but you never know. Another bidder put in a 310 euro bid with about one minute to go, but I still had the top bid. With only 5 seconds, a third bidder submitted a bid higher than mine, and won the lot for a mere 505 euros. Only that bidder knows what his/her bid was. It could have been thousands of euros, but that bidder won over me at just one bidding increment (5 euros) higher. What an incredible bargain!

The cover was mailed from Paris on 3 (or 9) December, 1869, just a few weeks after the stamp was issued. The stamp is cancelled by two strikes of the mute Paris star. Addressed to Monsieur Daujac at Franklin Street N° 77, New York, Etats Unis, it is also tied to the cover by a large, red, New York receiving mark, with indistinguishable



date. The red boxed PD indicates that additional might be collected at the destination. The blue lozenge with the arcuate text, Mail Service, may have been added on an American packet boat or on arrival at New York. The manuscript “Par Le Havre” at upper left indicates the routing of the cover to the port of Le Havre.

What did the envelope contain? Mailing a carte de visite at this time would have been much less than this, although rates this early for international mail are not included in Richardson’s Tables of French Postal Rates 1849-2005, which has international rates beginning with UPU in 1876. Transatlantic folded letters to the US, however, from this time typically bear 80 centimes postage. The faded red manuscript notation in the upper part of the envelope is “Valeur Deux Cent Francs.” It was a valeur déclarée cover containing, in all probability, 200 francs in banknotes. Determining the rate, however, is difficult. With 80 centimes being the basic letter rate, what was the cost of insurance and/or registry? This was a time when “philatelic” overpayment was unlikely. Richardson’s excellent table of postal rates, unfortunately, begins at 1876 for international mail, and he indicates that prior to 1921, the insurance rate depended on the destination. In pre-UPU days, all I know is that the rates were much higher, but perhaps a FCPS member can shed light on this.

A PUZZLING COVER TO HENRY-HAYE

Richard M. Stevens

First, some history, for which I must thank my French correspondents¹, since Wikipedia is too brief, and the World War II Database site is simply wrong. Gaston Henry-Haye was the ambassador from Vichy France to the United States. He remained in that position, even after the United States entered the war against Germany, until the American Forces invaded North Africa in November 1942, at which time France broke off relations and he ceased being ambassador. There seems to have been controversy then about his legal status. Anyway, there was no way for him to return to France, so he went into internment at a luxury hotel in Pennsylvania. He returned to Vichy France on March 17, 1944 as part of an exchange of interned diplomats.

Next, to the cover, the front of which is illustrated in Figure 1. The only marking on the back is the Martinique censorship marking, in Figure 2. Not readily visible, but possibly significant is the violet handstamp of an "X" followed by a smudge, enlarged in Figure 3. As purchased, the envelope was opened, with no contents.

The first question is the mailing date. Unfortunately I can give only a partial answer. The stamps are cancelled three times, but the postmarks are all similar: the day and month are 4 Fevrier, but the year date is not legible. I have tried inspecting it with the filters of Retro Reveal², but to no avail. Comparing with the other covers in my collection, I am sure that this CENSURE POSTAL 6 marking with a 21mm diameter inner circle was used only from late 1941 to summer 1943. In February 1941 Censor 6 was using a different device, with a larger inner circle. By February 1944 the Free French censors used new handstamps inscribed CENSURE MILITAIRE. The crispness of the strike suggests an earlier use, in 1942, but may have been the result of a periodic cleaning of accumulated ink. The lack of a U.S. censor tape would suggest a date before the U.S. entered the War, but I feel sure that 1940 or



Figure 1. Letter to Henry-Haye, ambassador, endorsed personal.



Figure 2. Martinique censor marking on back of cover.

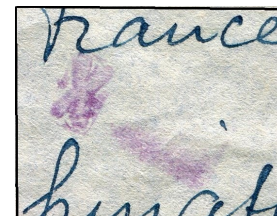


Figure 3. Between 2nd and 3rd address lines.

1941 is impossible. Mail to a foreign embassy may have been considered privileged and passed unopened or marked. Broderick and Mayo describe a system of black or violet dots and bars used on possibly privileged mail³, but these are reported only from late 1943. Perhaps the violet X on this cover is an earlier version, or one used at Miami rather than New York or Washington. Neither the X or the crossed lines on this cover were recognized by Dann Mayo⁴.

The next problem is the rate. The postage has been paid as 9.50 Francs, including both a 50 centimes stamp and a 1 Franc stamp. This makes it unlikely that 9.50 is a convenience overpayment of an 8, 8.50 or 9 Franc rate. The stamps used are four of the most commonly used values of the 1933-40 Definitive Issue. It does not look like a philatelically-inspired franking. I believe the

sender thought 9.50 Francs was the correct rate. In either February 1942 or 1943 the airmail charge from Martinique to the United States was 4 Francs for each 5 grams⁵. This was added to the surface rate. The UPU surface rate was 2.50 Francs for 20 grams on February 4, 1942, and raised to 4 Francs for 20 grams by 1943⁵. The totals of 6.50, 10.50, 8, and 12 for 5 or 10 grams are commonly seen. Since these don't fit, let us look at the French area rates. I have been assured that a French consulate was considered French territory by the post office, and could qualify for French area rates¹. In February 1943 the French area rate was definitely 1.50 Francs for 20 grams⁵. In February 1942 the situation is complex. The rate in France was raised from 1 Franc to 1.50 Francs on January 5, 1942⁶. However, in Martinique, the rate increase was not effective until February 18, 1942⁷. If the sender believed the letter weighed 5-10 grams then $1.50 + 2 \times 4.00 = 9.50$. This is the only way to get 9.50 Francs. However, I am also told¹ that the French area rate only applied if the letter could be carried by French transportation, and, since the French line steamers were no longer operating to the United States, the French area rate was not applicable. Nevertheless, to make the postage 9.50 Francs, the sender must have believed it weighed 5-10 grams, that it qualified for the French area rate, and that the French area rate was 1.50 Francs for 20 grams. If it was 1942, then the sender must have believed that the increased rate was necessary, since it had already been effective in France for a month

Now the final question: What happened to this cover? If the year is 1942, it could have been passed by the U.S. censor as privileged, delivered as addressed, and privately marked with the crossed lines after receipt. If it is from 1943, it may have never left Martinique. Either the censor or the post office could have recognized that Henry-Haye was no longer ambassador, applied the crossed lines, and, since it had no return address, sent it to the "dead letter office". There must have been some such facility at Fort-de-France, but I have never seen or heard of a cover which bore such markings. Perhaps it was just put into a pile at the Censor Office, and eventually passed into the philatelic market. As I wrote in the title: a puzzling cover.

END NOTES

1. Jerome Bourgnat, Jean Goanvic, Private Communication
2. Web site retroreveil.org.
3. Brodrick, W.N. & Mayo, D. Civil Censorship in the United States During World War II, Civil Censorship Study Group & War Cover Club, (1980), pp. 102-103.
4. Dann Mayo, Private Communication
5. Picirilli, Robert E. Postal and Airmail Rates in France & Colonies 1920-1945, France & Colonies Philatelic Society of Great Britain, Direct Offset, Glastonbury, Somerset, Great Britain, (2011), pp 185-189.
6. Alexandre, J.-P., Barbey, C., Brun, J.F., Desarnaud, G., & Joany, R. Les Tarifs Postaux Français 1627-1969. Editions Loisirs et Culture (1982). p. 132.
7. Bulletin Officiel du Ministère des Postes, Télégraphes et Téléphones No. 13 (10 Mai 1942). P.351.

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**Guadeloupe – Highlights of a Grand
Prix Winning Exhibit**

As Told by

Edward J.J. Grabowski

ZOOM Meeting – Details to Follow via Email

Link:

https://us04web.zoom.us/j/74231210629?pwd=_SzlGWnBRN3YxVVE3RUlwYXg5Z3QvZz09

FRENCH CONGO

“AR” marking changed to “R” for registration

Phillippe Lindekens

Registered mail in some central African colonies seemed to have unusual practices, very different from European habits. The Congo Free State (Belgian colony) was a prime example, where until 1905 only the "cities" at the mouth of the Congo River offered registered mail service. French Congo also stood out by transforming the “AR” – AVIS de RECEPTION – rectangular octagon handstamp into a device used for registration – “_R.”

At the end of 1902, registered covers appeared on which the usual octagonal “R” marking for registration was replaced by the “AR” handstamp but without the letter “A.” This left a space within the handstamp where the postal clerk wrote the number of the registration. This practice obviously made it possible to combine registration as a “two in one,” with the registered number and “R” clearly associated on the envelope or card. The advantage was similar to that offered by registration labels already in use in some European countries.

It seems to me that it was a local initiative, since I have not found an official text describing this practice. I have encountered this “_R” marking on only eight registered letters from only two post offices:

- BRAZZAVILLE: seven letters known to the author dated from November 19, 1902, to July 6, 1903
- OUESSO: only one letter known to the author sent December 9, 1902.

These eight covers are reproduced here to docu-

ment their existence, five of which are in my collection. This also illustrates their rarity, since I have never seen another. It is also clear that the overall scarcity of registered covers at the start of the 20th century does not help.

With this article, I hope that others will provide scans of covers that will expand the census of these “_R” covers. It would be especially helpful if new covers either expand the period of use or come from other offices.

To better define the period when the “_R” markings were in use, it would be helpful to note the dates when the octagonal “R” was in use, both before and after the “_R” handstamp. Of course this would also be true for other offices, if the “_R” marking was used elsewhere. I solicit your assistance to identify these dates, too.

By the same logic, it is also necessary to check whether the octagonal “R” might have been used contemporaneously with the “_R” marking at Brazzaville or Ouessou. If we find registered letters with the “R” handstamp from other offices during the period that the “_R” marking was used, we can probably conclude that those offices did not take the initiative to modify their “AR” handstamp.

The author thanks in advance any correspondents who add to the knowledge of this unusual registered mail practice in French Congo.

BRAZZAVILLE

19 November 1902



Registered cover (front only) sent from Brazzaville on November 19, 1902 to Mérac / Lot & Garonne / France.

Rate : First echelon letter rate (0 to 15 grams) to France (15c) + registration (25c)

Franking : 41c – 1c overfranked

Stamps: Chassepot 1900 printing – thick paper, perf. 11

Octagonal “_R” handstamp indicating registration, number 211.

20 November 1902

(collection A. Hurpet - COLFRA)



Registered cover sent from Brazzaville on November 20, 1902 to Charenton-le-Pont / Seine / France.

Rate : First echelon letter rate to France (15c) + registration (25c)

Franking : 40c – correct for a letter at the 1st weight

Stamps: Chassepot 1900 printing – thick paper, perf. 11

Octagonal “_R” handstamp indicating registration, number 451 – outside of the handstamp

We should note that this cover was sent from Brazzaville the day after the previous one with a difference in the registration numbers of 451-211 = 240. Did the Brazzaville post office process 240 registered items within a maximum of 2 days? if so, it demonstrates a lot of registered mail activity at this office at the beginning of the last century!

11 December 1902 (Gaertner auction)



Registered cover sent from Brazzaville on December 11, 1902, to Paris where it arrived on January 8, 1903.

Rate : First echelon letter rate to France (15c) + registration (25c)



Franking : 40c - correct for a letter at the 1st weight

Stamps: Chassepot 1900 printing, thick paper, perf. 11

Octagonal “_R” handstamp indicating registration with number 4 (+ clerk’s initials)

31 December 1902



Registered cover sent from Brazzaville on December 31, 1902, to Paris / France, where it arrived on January 28, 1903 – several Paris postal marks on reverse.

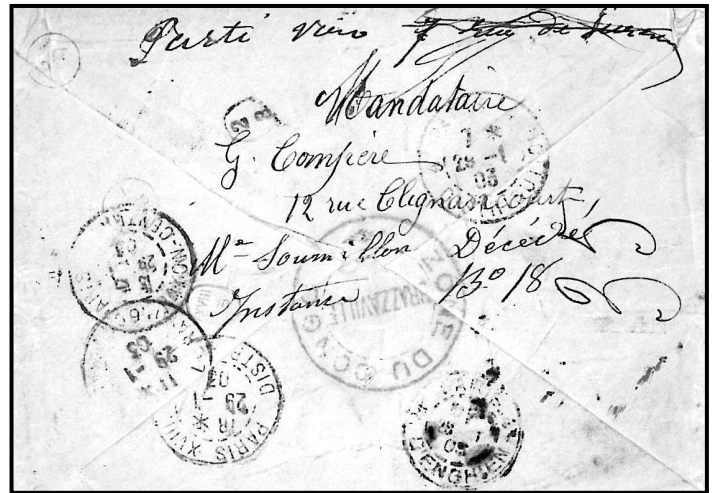
Rate : Third echelon letter rate (31 to 45 grams) to France (45c) + registration (25c)

Franking : 70c

Stamps: Chassepot 1900 printing, thick paper, perf. 11

Octagonal “_R” handstamp indicating registration with number 216

Reverse : Administrative cancel ZONE DU CONGO / BRAZZAVILLE



13 March 1903



Registered cover sent from Brazzaville on March 13, 1903 to Nimes / France, where it arrived April 23, 1903.

Rate : First echelon letter rate to France (15c) + registration (25c)

Franking: 40c

Stamp: Chassepot 1900 printing, thick paper, perf. 11

Octagonal “_R” handstamp indicating registration with number 36

14 March 1903



Registered cover sent from Brazzaville on March 14, 1903, to Paris, where it arrived on April 23, 1903.

Rate : First echelon letter rate to France (15c) + registration (25c)

Franking: 40c

Stamps: Chassepot 1900 printing, thick paper, perf. 11

Octagonal “_R” handstamp indicating registration with number 73

This cover was sent from Brazzaville the day after the previous one with a difference in the registration numbers of $73-36 = 37$. This seems much more reasonable than the gap of 240 registration numbers between the first and second items above.

6 July 1903



(collection Thomas Lindekens – my son who collects the Groupe issues of French Congo and Gaboon)

Registered envelope (postal stationery - front only) sent from Brazzaville on July 6, 1903, to Sarlat / Dordogne / France.

Rate : First echelon letter rate to France (15c) + registration (25c)

Franking: 40c

Stamps: Groupe issue, 1892 postal stationery and stamps

Octagonal “_R” handstamp indicating registration with number 122

Note of sender in left upper corner “France (via Anvers)”

Antwerp (Anvers in French) is a Belgian port – that suggests the use of a Belgian ship in place of a French one, that probably already left Brazzaville. Most probably carried on the Belgian paquebot Philippeville of the CBMC (Compagnie Belge Maritime du Congo) from Matadi on July 10, 1903 to Antwerp on August 4, 1903.

Without the reverse, it's impossible to confirm that with the arrival or transit cancellations.

OUESSO9 November 1902

Registered cover (front only) sent from Ouesso on December 9, 1902, to Méric / Lot & Garonne / France.

Rate : First echelon letter rate to France (15c) + registration (25c)

Franking: 40c

Stamp: Chassepot 1900 printing, thick paper, perf. 11

Octagonal “_R” handstamp indicating registration with number 408, rounded corners rather than the rectangular octagon used at Brazzaville

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Guadeloupe – Highlights of a Grand Prix Winning Exhibit

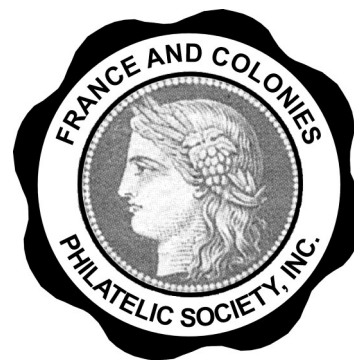
As Told by

Edward J.J. Grabowski

ZOOM Meeting – Details to Follow via Email

Link:

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/74231210629?pwd=SzlGWnBRN3YxVVE3RUIwYXg5Z3Z3QvZz09>



Mail Fail from France to the US in the Era of the Covid-19 Spike of New York City

Thomas R. Marra

This is a continuation of the saga previously discussed by James R. Taylor and others about delayed or failed mail delivery from France. Although I present an anecdotal case here, it appears the problem may be more likely attributable to the USPS than the French postal service.

The letter displayed represents a philatelic purchase I made from a Delcampe French seller who incorporates his business in Andorra, presumably for tax purposes. Andorra is a tax haven! For obvious reasons he will remain anonymous. The seller warned me in advance that he was considering excluding the US from future sales due to problems with delivery of previous registered letters to the New York City area, sent in December 2019, which had yet to be delivered by February

2020. By the time of my purchase, it was late February, and my registered letter received a Paris CDS dated Feb. 28, 2020, and left Roissy Airport the same day. It is obvious from the photo that the letter was adorned with a pleasant philatelic franking of some current low value Euro and new franc denominated stamps and other very old *ancien franc* denominated Marianne de Dulac stamps of 1944-45 (total of 40 old francs). The stamps were clearly insufficient to meet the nearly 8 Euro combined postage and registration fee for overseas mail and I assumed the seller must have prepaid most of the tariff in cash. By March 24, I had not received my letter and contacted the seller for the registration number for tracking. By this time, Covid-19 infections were clearly accelerating in the New York area and the air passenger shutdown of Europe had commenced on March



Unsuccessful 3+ month journey of my registered letter from France, stuck in the New York regional postal system during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic spike and eventually returned to the sender in Paris.

12. My French vendor again expressed his frustration regarding mail deliveries to the US. Not only did he give me my registration number, but also asked my assistance to track down 2 other undelivered registered letters to the New York area. According to the postal tracking website, all 3 letters arrived at the New York International Sorting Center (ISC) within 24 hours of leaving Paris. By late March, the earlier letters of December remained undelivered and seemed stuck in the New York postal system. My letter arrived at the New York ISC on February 29. Then the chaos began. It was next tracked to the New York USPS Regional Office after about a 2 week delay, then went to Syracuse after another 2 weeks, then back to the New York City regional office and, eventually, back to the New York ISC. By this time, it was late May and I had given up hope of ever receiving the letter. In early June, I made one last trip to the postal registration tracking website and was stunned to learn that "*votre envoie vient d'arriver en France*"! About 2 weeks later, the seller notified me he had just received the letter on June 5, providing me with a scan of the letter with the attached yellow label **Return To Sender-Vacant-Unable To Forward**.

I have no idea why the letter was never sent to my home, a suburb of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The address is clearly legible and I can only speculate regarding the cause of this *mail fail*. Since this occurred during the height of the New York Covid-19 infection spike were there personnel illness or other staffing issues in the New York USPS? Why were there nearly 2 week transfer delays between the various regional NYC post offices? Was no one able to read the 53217-1245 zip code? No attempt was made to send the letter beyond New York state and my address is not **vacant**. What does **vacant** mean in the **Return To Sender** notice? Was it simply a question of incompetence or **vacant** mail processing?

Lastly, maybe more credit is due the USPS. Someone may have recognized that 40 old franc denominated Dulac stamps were worth only 6% of a single Euro (about 7 cents US) and the letter was returned to the sender for further postage. If the stamps were denominated as 40 new francs, the value would be about 6 Euro and my brief Google research indicated that some French dealers use old franc denominated stamps to defraud

the post office as sorting machines are unable to differentiate old from new francs.

It is probably not surprising that vintage Marianne de Dulac stamps of 1945 are mistaken for more contemporary French definitive stamps. They were beautifully engraved and printed in Britain during the war by De La Rue. The subject of Marianne, of course, has frequently appeared on current French definitive stamps but with minor changes of the profile of Marianne depending on the issue. The high quality Dulacs mistakenly assumed to be denominated in more valuable post 1960 new francs is not surprising, especially when relying on the artificial intelligence of a sorting machine that has no philatelic knowledge!

**Have YOU
Considered
Sharing Your
Knowledge?
Why not write an
article for the
FCP?
Contact the
Editor**

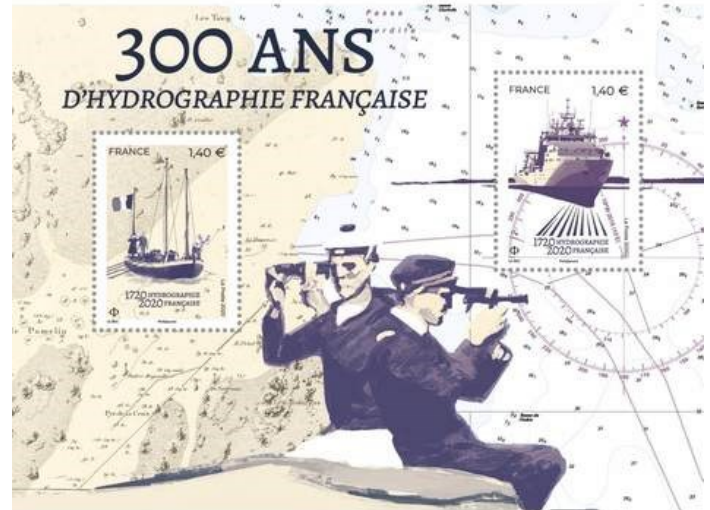
New Issues

France

- ◇ 30 Mar 2020: Spring Philatelic Salon at Dole. €0.97.
- ◇ 30 Mar 2020: Vacations and cars. Sheetlet of 4 different nondenominated forever stamps valid for the green letter rate in France. €5.50.
- ◇ 6 Apr 2020: Felix Nadar. Photographer. Sheetlet of 12. 4 different €1.40 designs. €5.60.
- ◇ 6 Apr 2020: Bird eggs. Booklet of 12 different nondenominated forever stamps valid for the green letter rate in France. €11.64.
- ◇ 20 Apr 2020: Raphaël 1483-1520 (artist). €2.32.
- ◇ 4 May 2020: Cosmos (flora). Booklet of 12 different nondenominated stamps valid for the green letter rate in France. €11.64.
- ◇ 11 May 2020: Ancient Postal Routes (Europa). €1.40.
- ◇ 18 May 2020: French Red Cross. Booklet of 10 different nondenominated forever stamps valid for the green letter rate in France. €11.70.
- ◇ 25 May 2020: Tercentenary of French Hydrography. Sheetlet of 2 different €1.40 stamps. €2.80.
- ◇ 8 Jun 2020: Marriage. Sheetlet of 8 different nondenominated forever stamps valid for the green letter rate in France. €11.00
- ◇ 8 Jun 2020: Birth-Baby is here. Sheetlet of 8 different nondenominated forever stamps valid for the green letter rate in France. €11.00.
- ◇ 12 Jun 2020: Rose de mai (flora). €0.97.
- ◇ 15 Jun 2020: 800 anniversary Faculté Médecine Montpellier. €1.16.
- ◇ 15 Jun 2020: Frédéric Dard (author). €0.97.
- ◇ 15 Jun 2020: Boris Vian, author. Sheetlet of 6 identical €1.16 stamps se-tenant with labels. The sheetlet can be cut and folded to form a box. €6.96.
- ◇ 15 Jun 2020: Flowers of Grasse. Sheetlet of 4 different €0.97 stamps. €3.88.
- ◇ 22 Jun 2020: Vacations. Booklet of 12 different nondenominated forever stamps valid for the green letter rate in France. €11.64.
- ◇ 29 Jun 2020: Rodemack Moselle. €0.97.
- ◇ 29 Jun 2020: Olympe de Gouges 1748-1793.

€2.52.

- ◇ 29 Jun 2020: 50 years of GR 20, a trail crossing Corsica. Sheetlet of one stamp. €1.16.
- ◇ 29 Jun 2020: La Gravure, special issue for Paris Philex 2020. Sheetlet of 6 identical €4.00 stamps. €24.00.



Andorra

- ◇ 4 Apr 2020: GR 7, a hiking trail. €1.16.
- ◇ 18 May 2020: Old Andorran postal routes. €1.40.
- ◇ 13 Jun 2020: Espai Columba, a cultural facility to preserve religious artifacts. €1.16.
- ◇ 20 Jun 2020: Rainbow trout. €1.16.
- ◇ 4 Jul 2020: Archaeologic sites, L'Orri del Cubil. €2.32.



TAAF

No new issues since the last journal.

French Polynesia

- ◇ 26 Jun 2020: Island images Nuku Hiva. 80F. €0.67.
- ◇ 26 Jun 2020: Banana flowers. 100F. €0.84.

New Caledonia

- ◇ 1 Jul 2020: 10th Pacific Islands Biodiversity Conservation Conference. Nondenominated stamp, valid for the 20g overseas rate. €0.92.
- ◇ 1 Jul 2020: Lovers. Nondenominated stamp illustrated by coral, valid for the 20g overseas rate. €1.76.

St. Pierre & Miquelon

- ◇ 11 Apr 2020: Life scenes. Sheetlet of 4 different €1.16 stamps. €4.64.



Monaco

- ◇ 29 Apr 2020: 150th anniversary of the birth of Prince Louis II. €0.95.
- ◇ 6 May 2020: Ancient postal routes. €1.40.
- ◇ 3 Jun 2020: Combat Corona Campaign. €1.16.
- ◇ 11 Jun 2020: 250th anniversary birth of Beethoven. €2.80.
- ◇ 11 Jun 2020: Oceanographic Museum of Monaco. Sheetlet of 3 different stamps. €1.16, 1.40, 1.90.
- ◇ 25 Jun 2020: Artwork in the national collection– L'Indolence by Eva Gonzales. €1.90.

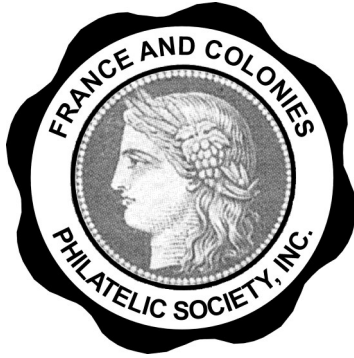


Wallis & Futuna

- ◇ 25 May 2020: Festival of nature. 300F.
- ◇ 18 Jun 2020: 80th anniversary of the Appeal June 18, 1940. 350F.



Society News



Membership Notices

NEW MEMBERS

3514 Lindekens, Philippe
Brussels, Belgium

Members Appeals

WANTED: Tunisian high value airmail stamps, Scott numbers C17-C20 on cover. Scans with asking price to Norval Rasmussen at nrasmu@gmail.com or 875 Vandalia Rd, Morgantown, WV 26501.

Convention Schedule

Rocky Mountain Stamp Show 2021
Dates to be announced

NAPEX 2022
June 3-5, 2022

Instructions for authors

Electronic submission using Microsoft Word © is preferred. Pictures scanned at 300 dpi reproduce well and can be shown larger without losing clarity. The preferred format for the pictures will remain TIF but JPEG is acceptable..

In all cases if you need assistance in producing your article, cover write up, column closer, or other submission contact me: nrasmu@gmail.com or 875 Vandalia Road, Morgantown, WV 26501, or 304-290-6117.

Deadlines are the 15th of the month preceding publication (December 15, March 15, June 15, September 15) but I can be reasonable.

ED

We Get Letters

Is this really needed?

The email notification announcing that the new Philatelist was ready to be downloaded reached me today in my inbox (April 16). By clicking on the link to the society website, I reached the home page of our website and had to navigate down to FCPS Philatelist. After clicking, I was presented with a list of the past Philatelist of which the last 5 years are password protected.

So naturally, when I click on the latest journal, a box asks me to type a password. Having not read the complete original message and having absolutely no prior recollection of any password, I send in panic an email to the secretary whose email address in posted just before the journal list and ask for assistance. Well unable to wait for his reply, I finally read the note and discover that the password is *Eiffeltower*, but that it is due shortly to be changes to *Notredame*. As perhaps you could expect, it had already changed and *Eiffeltower* is now invalid. Therefore, I have better luck with *Notredame* and only have to wait for the journal to unfold on my monitor in all it's color glory. Very good and pleased with myself, I save the journal to my hard desk to reserve it for a later reading. When I am back a couple of hours later and click on the icon on my hard desk, I am again faced with the annoying box demanding a password. Having learned from my experiences, I this time type *Notredame* and there it is again. So far - very good. But saving the journal again apparently does not rid me of the annoying box. Realizing that if I should desire to read it again, say a couple of years later, I would have no way of remembering the password unless I amend the file title with the password. Then I get smart and check one of the older protected journals and as feared is again faced with a password demand. As you perhaps by now would expect, this time nether *Eiffeltower* nor *Notredame* do the trick.

The solution to preserve the journal for future readings turns out to require that I go into the permission details in Adobe Acrobat and here change the settings to 'No Security' and then save it as a normal pdf-file. I take it that this solution was intentional by the creator and not an over-

sight. But how many of our members would know how to do that, have the right software, and more importantly the patience.

So the question is *if this really is needed?* Why not attach the journal directly with the email, or perhaps better to include a direct link that will bring up the journal without protection to anybody with the original note? Are we really afraid that people randomly should get access to our website and download a copy of a recent journal without having paid the dues? How many collectors of France and its colonies do we think are out there looking for a free copy of the philatelist? Do we really think that our journal is so great and the dues so high that a collector would attempt hacking our website?

Our journal is our primary treasure and should be used as a promotional tool in addition to function as our membership fulfillment. Show me a collector that would avoid paying a small fee and not getting a notice when it is available. This is just my two cents.

Peter Thy, April 16, 2020

The board has taken Mr. Thy's comments and advice. The website is now password protected for the last 5 years of journals. The journals are no longer password protected so that once accessed can be downloaded or searched easily. The user name for the website access was distributed to members in an email earlier this year. If you missed it email me at nrasmu@gmail.com and I will supply both user name and password.

ED

Dear Friends,

I invite you and other authors to participate in SESCOAL's First Annual Literature Exhibition of Philatelic Articles. This is an exhibition of printed and electronically delivered articles related to the collection and study of postage stamps and stationery, airmail stamps, postal history, revenue stamps and stamped paper, cinderella stamps and associated specialized fields. This is the first literature exhibition of this type at SESCOAL and will be conducted and judged according to the APS Manual of Literature Judging and Exhibiting, October 2019. This manual is

available free online at <https://stamps.org/events/judging-information>.

Prospectus and Application form is attached. More information can be found at <https://sescal.org/literature-exhibit>

Entries may be made by individuals, societies, or commercial businesses. This may be authors, editors, publishers, sponsoring organizations, or webmasters. A separate application is required for each title entered. The entry fee is \$30 payable by check made out to SESCAL and sent to the Literature Exhibit Chairperson, Lois M. Evans-de Violini, 1950 Patricia St., Oxnard, CA 93036. Email: SESCALlois@gmail.com.

The article itself should be sent as either a .pdf or word file. It can be sent as an attachment to an email, on a CD, or flash drive/stick. Exhibitors outside the U.S. may pay via PayPal. Contact the Literature Exhibits Chairman by email for further instructions.

With hopes that you are well and weathering the social and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is my pleasure to invite you to attend SESCAL 2020 on October 2-4, 2020 at the Ontario Convention Center with the majestic lofty peak of Mount San Antonio as our backdrop. Our show hotel, the beautiful Doubletree by Hilton, Ontario Airport, is just next door.

Should the virus force the closing SESCAL in October, the literature exhibit awards and ribbons will be awarded and posted on the SESCAL website along with the articles themselves. This competition will go on either with or without a physical SESCAL show in 2020.

If appropriate, please post notice of this competition in your journal. Share this email with others you know who might be interested in this competition.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

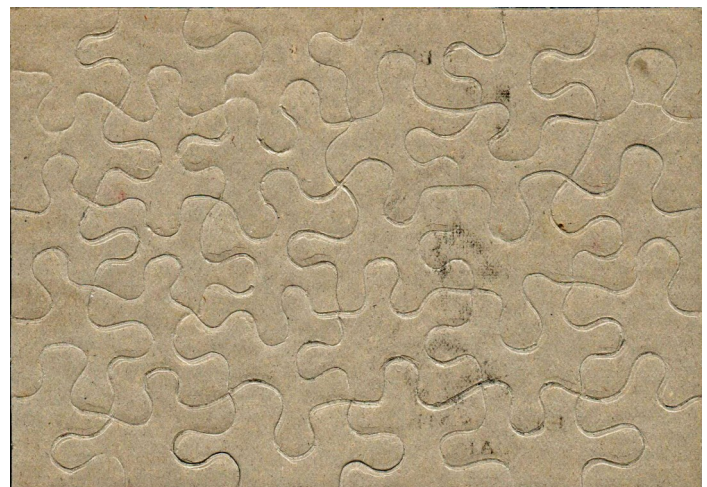
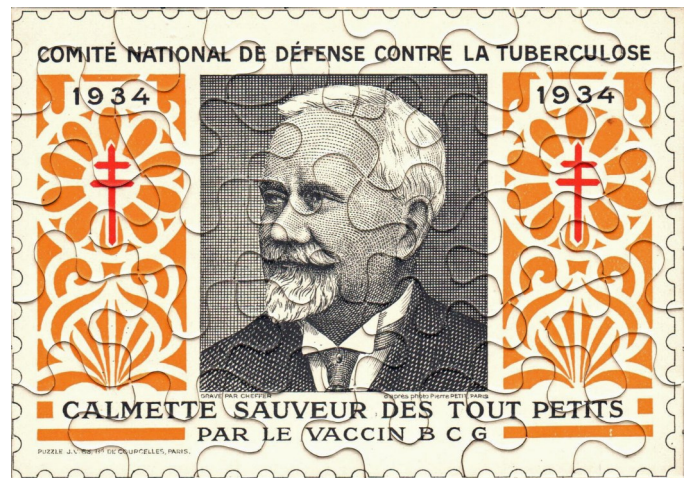
Lois M. Evans-de Violini, SESCAL Literature Chairperson
1950 Patricia St., Oxnard, CA 93036
Email: SESCAL.lois@gmail.com
Phone: 805-983-4741

Hello Norval,

I really enjoyed James Taylor's article about the 1934 TB stamps honoring Albert Calmette. It was nice to see a cinderella discussed in the Philatelist. I collect these and others of the anti-TB stamps issued in France in the 1920's and 1930's but I had not known of the Departmental and Colonial overprints on these labels until I read Taylor's article. One thing that the author did not show or mention was the small (153 x 110 mm) jigsaw puzzle made using the design of the Calmette stamp. I've attached scans of the front and back of this puzzle; the back shows the pattern of the pieces better than the front. I've been told that these are usually seen with pieces missing. This is an unusual piece of philatelic collateral material.

John Bloor <aerophil59@yahoo.com> Sat, May 9, 5:51 PM

See James Taylor's addendum page 65. ED



Dear Editor

JF Brun in Paris has just put out this article on the Granet Issues of the General Issues. This is a subject that is dear to the heart of all GI collectors. Maybe you could put a note on this in the FCP and a link to it on the web site. For those who do not want to read the French, I suggest pasting the text into Google Translation.

Ed Grabowski

Following is the web address for JF Brun's Philatelie Expert site. ED

Hello everyone, We have updated our website <http://www.philatelie.expert> with a full article on Granet "reprint". The containment will last another few days (here in France), take the opportunity to browse the entire site! In addition, the offices will be open on May 12, you can already prepare your expertise to send us, always in registered mail. Take care of yourself and your loved ones.



Dear Sir,

I hope this mail finds you well.

I have a query. I am looking for a list showing which Feldpost number corresponded to which town in Alsace-Lorraine, 1870-1872. An example is the cover image attached. The cancel reads "K.Pr. Feld-post No. 22", that is King of Prussia Military post No. 22. Now, what

city or unit corresponds to Nr. 22? Do you know of such a list, or where it may be found?

Perhaps one of your members has such a list. Any information you can provide would be welcome.

Regards,

Lawrence Mead <Lawrence.Mead@usm.edu>

Dear Editor,

I am hoping that you may be able to help me, or at least point me in the right direction. I recently purchased two prisoner of war WWI postcards and am trying to find out more about them. One is postmarked Buchloe (Bavaria, Germany) and addressed to the "Depot de prisonniers de guerre de la lande (Dordogne) Gare Razac Nr 2609. Groupe 09. The card bears the cachet from the delivery address, marked 12th Region. Question: Do you have any information relating to the delivery address?

The other postcard is addressed to Germany, but sent from Roussillon, France, and bears two cachets, one marked "service postal" and the other "VU par l'interprete de Roussillon".

Question: Do you have any information relating to Roussillon?

Any help would be much appreciated.

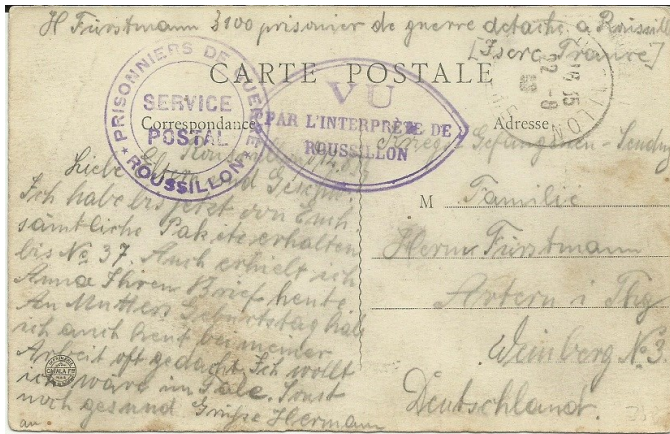
Best regards

Malcolm Cole

Member of Bookham Stamp Club

England





Replies may be sent to Malcolm Cole at
 coleseeker@aol.com. ED

Editorial continued from page 56

I've received requests for information from members and have published them in the **We Get Letters** column. If you can answer their questions please do so.

I encourage you to participate in the virtual meeting next month, advertisements for which I have sprinkled generously throughout this issue. Ed Grabowski is a powerful and knowledgeable speaker.

There is still too much white space in this issue. Send me a picture and some comments about your favorite philatelic item. These column closers are real bounty in any editor's chest.

Hoping all of you are safe, I'll implore you to remain so. Wear your masks.

Norval Rasmussen
 Editor

Do We Have Your Email Address?

If you didn't receive this issue electronically, we don't.

Contact Joel Bromberg at

jbromberg@inta.org

SHOW REPORTS

March Party 2020

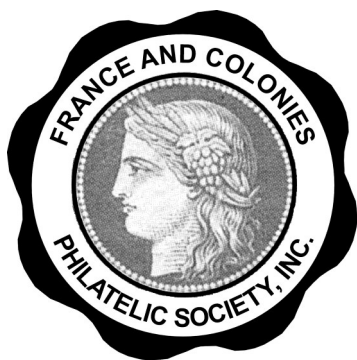
Strongsville OH March 6-8, 2020

Gold to **Ken Nilsestuen** for “The French Congo 1900 Pictorial Issue.” Large vermeil to **Jere Dutt** for “Dahomey: Man Climbing Oil Palm Design— the Workhorse of Dahomey Definitives.” Also the AAPE Gold Award of Honor Pin. Single frame large silver to nonmember **Daniel Warren** for “The Cherifien Post of Morocco (1892-1913).”

Sarasota National 2020

Sarasota FL February 7-9, 2020

Gold (literature) to **Larry Rosenblum** for “France's Sower Design Proliferated with Post-World War I Inflation.” Large silver (literature) to **Larry Rosenblum** for “Pneumatic Post Moved Mail in Paris for More Than a Century.”



L'ACADÉMIE DE PHILATÉLIE has released the April 2020 issue of *Documents Philateliques* in a digital version. They have requested we make it available to all interested parties. It will be available on the FCPS website.

YOU ARE INVITED

to an

ON-LINE MEETING

AUGUST 25, 2020

7:30 PM EDT

**Guadeloupe – Highlights of a Grand
Prix Winning Exhibit**

As Told by

Edward J.J. Grabowski

ZOOM Meeting – Details to Follow via Email

Link:

https://us04web.zoom.us/j/74231210629?pwd=_SzlGWnBRN3YxVVE3RUlwYXg5Z3Z3QvZz09